

Lightning Scars

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One-shot

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****Written for the tumblr prompt:****

****anonymous asked:****

****I've read some of your fics (still reading rn) and I would love to read your take on Sasuke's thoughts (and feelings?) the first time he saw the scar on Karin's body caused by himself when he stabbed through her.****

****Assume nobody's gotten together and had kids yet, because seriously? Your teachers were waiting until thirty to have kids, and that was sans marriage. Where do you get off getting married and having babies at twenty?****

o.o.o.o.o

Sasuke's hurt a lot of people. Mostly strangers, sure, but that doesn't change the fact that almost nobody he's gotten close to has gotten away unscathed.

(Suigetsu, maybe. He's willing to admit that. He'd chosen Taka based on who would survive keeping Kisame distracted, so they're all very hard to kill, for one reason or another. Suigetsu may have taken a while to heal once or twice, but the injuries were never from Sasuke's hand directly. He and Juugo are overall basically undamaged from Sasuke's teen angst bullshit, inside and out.)

(Maybe that's why it's so much easier to spend time with them than

anyone else.)

And, well, when you hurt that many people, they don't tend to _stay_ close. Naruto insists on sticking around, and Kakashi and Sakura sort of hover closer bit by bit, but most of the people he knew in Konoha stay far away from him, war hero or not. Shinobi from other villages outright make a sign to ward off evil when he passes by sometimes. So do Konoha's civilians.

â€|Basically, a lot of people don't like Sasuke. That's fine. He doesn't like himself much either.

Karin stays far away, too, in the beginning. He hears how she's doing from Suigetsu, when he drops by, because Suigetsu is still friends with Juugo, and Juugo is still loyal to Sasuke. Suigetsu might also be friends with Sasuke, but neither of them is going to admit it, because reasons.

("That's a shit explanation, bastard," Naruto tells him when he haltingly explains Taka's current status. "What do you mean, 'reasons'?")

(He makes air quotes with his fingers.)

("I mean," Sasuke snaps his chopsticks in half by accident, "_reasons."_)

When he finally sees Karin again, he's left Konoha on a mission and needs a tracker. She greets him with silence, mouth working furiously in an attempt to say something, but indecision muting her until she finally huffs and walks past him, ignoring Suigetsu and Juugo. "Let's go. I know who you're looking for."

Sasuke tries not to feel insulted. He's more successful in that than in trying not to feel hurt.

Karin has every right to hate him. She had no obligation to accept his request for help. She's here. That should be enough.

(He thinks back to Konoha and Sakura's hopeful expression whenever she sees him.)

(He thinks he'd be more disturbed if Karin accepted him with open arms again, now that they're no longer children and there's no longer a war raging around them.)

(He thinks he's thankful that Karin isn't as endlessly optimistic as Naruto and Sakura. She's more like Kakashi, in that sense.)

(He can't hurt her as easily now.)

It's almost, _almost_, like hunting for Itachi again. Team Taka, jumping from hotel to hotel, following Karin's directions as she hones in on a signature any other sensor would have lost to the ether before they ever managed to find it in the first place. Karin and Suigetsu still argue. Juugo still talks to birds. Sasuke still ignores everything unless he needs to mediate an argument or ask for orders when grabbing food or booking rooms.

It makes the differences all the more glaring. Karin and Suigetsu

actually have moments of quiet understanding. Juugo trusts himself enough to be alone once in a while. And Sasuke feels the phantom presence of Karin at his shoulder when they stop somewhere, because she doesn't hold her old spot next to him, coming as close as he'll let her and backing off when he asks. She doesn't come close at all, and the old spot is filled with Juugo, who looms and fidgets and doesn't quite know what to do with himself.

It's not a bad dynamic, but it's different. Sasukeâ€¦ Sasuke kind of misses the old days, in that sense. He regrets a lot of things, but alienating the one woman who actually understood his pain instead of just seeing it and pitying him is one of the biggest. There are only a handful of people in the world who can actually say "I lost everything" and mean it to the extent that the members of Team Taka can.

"Karin," He says one morning as they're about to head out. He's standing just outside her hotel door, knocking. "Karin?"

There's no answer, just some muffled thuds and cursing. Sasuke waits a few moments, remaining hand hovering over his kunai, and then opens the door and steps inside.

Karin is seated on the bed, mostly-clothed. Her characteristic purple jacket is open, revealing a plain black bra and scarred skin. She looks up as he comes in, and rolls her eyes. She huffs and crosses her arms, too.

"Would it have killed you to wait until I got the zipper unstuck, Sasuke-kun?"

He doesn't flinch in surprise when he hears the honorific (never mind that she's barely spoken to him directly since they arrived). He doesn't think on how the girls back home probably would have shrieked and thrown something at him if he'd walked in on them half-dressed (because Orochimaru's experiments have left them all a little immune to the social standards regarding nudity). He doesn't think on how this is his first time seeing a girl basically shirtless (because Naruto's stupid Oiroke no Jutsu doesn't count, dammit.)

He's a little distracted, honestly.

"What?" Karin says, hunching in on herself a little self-consciously. "Seriously, stop staring like that. It's freaking me out."

"Iâ€¦" Sasuke swallows, "I thought you said only the bite marks ever scarred."

"Oh," her face clears in understanding, and then immediately sours. She looks down at the white, shiny skin below her collarbone, just to her left of the large patch of unblemished tan that covers the center of her chest. She grimaces. "That."

Sasuke takes a hesitant step closer, and then continues once Karin doesn't tell him to stop. He stops in front of her, and dithers.

"Howâ€¦"

"If I'd bitten myself to heal from your Chidori, it wouldn't have scarred." She doesn't shy away from the fact that he'd nearly killed her. She never has, of course, but the bluntness is refreshing after

Konoha. "But I didn't have the energy for that, so your teammate healed me instead. She's good, butâ€¦ well, even she leaves marks."

Sasuke swallows again. "There's nothing left in the middleâ€¦"

Karin scoffs, and answers the unasked question. "There wasâ€¦ one of those clones, a weird one, in the war. He had some kind of fucked-up Mokuton. Stabbed me with it. It left a hole bigger than your Chidori, but I was already hyped up on adrenaline, and fast enough to bite myself so that it healed over. Ergo, no scarring."

She pauses. "That's about when I got the chains, actually."

Sasuke's heard rumors of the chains, though he hasn't seen them. He kind of wants to. They sound impressive.

"I don't remember that part of the war."

"You were dead." Karin says, shifting to the side and patting the bed next to her. Sasuke sits down as she continues. "Or very, very close to it. Iâ€¦ was kind of on a suicide charge to get to you before you passed on completely when all this happened."

There's a long, drawn-out silence. It's very awkward. Sasuke wants to leave, but the atmosphere's not right for even him to do something like that in a conversation like this.

"Your Hokageâ€¦ the old one, the Senju lady." Karin says, finally, "She mentioned that she'd heard stories about Uzumaki bloodlines, mostly the chains."

Sasuke has no idea where she's going with this, but nods to show that he's listening.

"Apparently," Karin laughs grimly, "They can only be fully awoken while under great duress, trying to protect someone you love."

Sasuke, very carefully, does not move.

Karin, very carefully, does not say anything else.

There's another awkward silence.

Hate me, Sasuke begs silently, _I deserve it. Don't be like Konoha. Don't forgive those close to you just because they have an excuse. Don't forgive me just because you loved me, once._

"Iâ€¦ was not aware that your affection for me was that strong." Sasuke finally says. It doesn't sound like enough, but it's all he can think of.

(Naruto would be facepalming by now, he thinks. Maybe he is, through that stupid crystal ball.)

"You were kind of oblivious, no matter how bad I was at hiding shit." Karin says. "Turned out to be a bit of a mistake on my part, to be honest. Can't bring myself to regret it completely, but _damn_ was loving you dangerous."

"You wouldn't have said love before." Sasuke comments.

"I was sixteen and stupid and self-conscious." Karin shrugs. "I've grown up."

Sasuke thinks on that for a moment. "I'm sorry."

Karin blinks at him. "Forâ€¦ being an oblivious teenage boy? You were sixteen and so obsessed with revenge you wouldn't have noticed if I lounged naked on your bed surrounded in rose petals and candles with a sign saying 'Please fuck me now,' Sasuke."

Sasuke makes a face at that image, because that definitely sounds like a fire hazard and a terrible mess to clean up. "No, I meant aboutâ€¦ you knowâ€¦"

He gestures vaguely at his own chest, and then finishes the sentence when Karin's face takes on a sort of exasperated understanding. "Stabbing you."

"I know. That doesn't make it okay, but I know. Why else do you think I was so quick to forgive you back then?"

"We were young and there was a war going on, so nobody was making particularly rational decisions?" Sasuke tries, because that's been his assumption so far. "And as soon as you got some time to think about it, you realized that forgiving me was a terrible mistake?"

Karin opens her mouth, then closes it and lifts a hand, making a so-so gesture. "I mean, you're not _entirely_ _wrong, but a large part of it was that I could sense that you were being truthful. Sincere, even. I'm a chakra sensor. Being able to tell if someone is lying is intermediate level stuff, and I'm the best sensor on the continent. There are ways around it, but your control isn't that good, chakra _or_ emotions."

"Ah." Sasuke feels a little embarrassed, now. He'd never considered the idea that Karin actually had proper reasons for forgiving him.

He jerks out of his thoughts as Karin's hands take his. He's only got the one, now, but Karin's eyes are on his as she guides it to the pale white skin on her chest.

Sasuke's fingers brush against the scar he'd left on her chest, half a decade ago. Karin presses his hand closer, and then lets go. Her gaze still hasn't broken from his, daring him to take his hand away.

He swallows again. He seems to be doing a lot of that lately.

"You did this." Karin says. "I will not forget that. The memory of that day is going to haunt me for the rest of my life, because I came closer to dying that day than I have on any other, even while under Orochimaru's tender mercies."

He couldn't breathe.

"But I do forgive you." One hand comes back up to keep pressing his hand to the scar, while the other reaches up to brush a thumb against his cheek, cradling his jaw. "You're trying to be a better person. I'm not going to fault you for that."

You should. Please, let at least one person whose opinion matters actually hate me. The words are stuck in his throat. He's pretty sure his face would be frozen in terror if he hadn't gotten used to wiping emotion from it whenever possible by now.

Karin leans in, and for a second, Sasuke's worried she's going to press her lips to his and— and he's not sure why he's so terrified of that level of erasure of the past, but he is.

Instead, she kisses his cheek, and then drops the hand on her chest and presses her other to his back, a silent order to get up and leave so she can finish getting dressed.

Somehow, that's worse. It isn't just lust or some childish dream of romance pushing her.

(It never has been, his mind supplies, entirely unhelpful.)

She actually cares and actually forgives, and he _hates that._

(He hates himself more, of course. He just wishes that someone would acknowledge that and match him.)

End
file.